

## Narrated Theory in the Novel

### Thematic, structural and meta-reflexive dimensions of fictionalized literary theory in narrative texts

Workshop at the ICLA Congress Paris 2013 chaired by Manfred Schmeling and Christiane Solte-Gresser (Saarland University)

Current literary theories are usually perceived as critical approaches. The mode of comparing, inevitably inherent in the field of Comparative Literature, already seems to promote a critical perspective in and of itself. Additionally, literature bears a critical potential which literary criticism ultimately strives to reveal. Finally, different theoretical approaches, such as post-structuralism, gender studies, translation studies, intertextuality, psychoanalytic criticism, post-colonialism, or intercultural studies equally apply a critical perspective to the piece of literature, as well as on reality within or beyond it. This critical dimension now must double if narrative texts fictionalize these theoretical approaches. Starting from this premise, our group section aims to examine and to compare novels in which theoretical concepts become objects of the narrative. We want to focus on texts which do not present theories in a scholarly manner, but which narrate them in, or as, literature.

Questions that will guide us in our debate are the following:

- 1) On which level of the novel does the theory manifest itself? (as theme or motif; in the structure of the text; adding a self-referential or meta-reflexive dimension; through the characters' speech for example as an object of their philosophical reflections or as a narrator's ironic comment; a theorist appears as a fictional character in the novel; etc.)
- 2) What is the function of the fictionalized theory in the novel? (Serves as an illustration or confirmation; questions the theory or shows how it can be put into practice; as a critical reflection; as an experimental and esthetic game; etc.)
- 3) How can we develop a typology or a system for this literary phenomenon (f. ex., according to literary genres, periods, or cultural and national background)? And which methodological principles can help us to examine this theoretical dimension of the narrative? (Does it occur as an minor or a central topic in the text? Is it addressed in an explicit or an implicit way? What are the forms of its mediation and the levels of its enunciation?)
- 4) And last but not least: Are there novels that narrate literary or cultural theories which prove to be especially important to or prolific in the field of Comparative Literature?

If you would like to participate in this group section, we invite you to send us an abstract. Please explain which novels or narrative texts you wish to discuss or compare. Your selection need not be limited to either the period or the national and cultural background of your text. Our goal is not to read a text according to a specific theory (certainly every text could be read with the help of any theory) but rather we want to discuss texts in which theory itself is the object of the narrative. Therefore, we ask you to briefly indicate which literary or cultural theory is addressed in the novel, and how this fictionalized theory proves to be of importance to the text. Some examples include: Philip Roth's "The Human Stain" (myth criticism, postcolonial theory), Patricia Duncker's "Hallucinating Foucault" (discourse analysis, gender studies), Gilbert Adair's "The Death of the Author" (deconstruction, subjectivity theory). A more traditional example is André Gide's "Les Faux-Monnayeurs" (theory of fiction, genre theory). It is also possible to choose one particular theoretical problem and to show how it is addressed in several different novels.

Please submit your proposal via the website of ICLA Congress Paris 2013 (<http://icla-ailc-2013.paris-sorbonne.fr/>) no later than the **1st of June 2012**. Choose main topic number 21 *Raconter la théorie dans le roman*.